

MARCH 2013 NEWSPAPER

Solidarity with Palestinian Women under Israeli Occupation

International women's day is marked on the 8th of March, for Palestinians it is a symbolic reminder of the struggle Palestinian women face under Israel's brutal occupation that is continuing unabatedly. Palestinian women suffer from the repercussions of colonialism, occupation, violence, discrimination and racism. Living under occupation means that the women of Palestine are exposed to different kinds of oppression, both as women and Palestinians.

Palestinians in general face more immediate concerns of the humanitarian crisis under the Israeli occupation in which case women's issues are therefore sidelined and often become neglected. Roadblocks, patrols, curfews, checkpoints and the construction of the Wall has led to a negative impact on health, education and economic security of Palestinians in general. The restriction of movement due to these repressive measures has seriously impeded Palestinian women's access to health and education. This is culminated in the difficulties Palestinians encounter in reaching health centres due to checkpoints and the prevention of ambulances reaching emergency situations. According to the World Health Organisation Commission report in 2008, 71 women were forced to undergo labour at an Israeli checkpoint in 2007 of which 35 infants died as well as 5 mothers.

Palestinian women are constantly being subjected to harassment by Israeli settlers, and in Israeli jails they are exposed to undignified and harsh treatments, however, the absence of a male in the family means that women carry the burdens of home and family life. It is estimated that since 1967, more than 700,000 Palestinians have been arrested or detained in Israeli prisons and detention centres, among them 10,000 women according to a United Nations women's agency. Palestinian women prisoners continue to suffer under poor conditions of detention, denied family visits, inadequate access to health care and food, denied basic hygiene, lack of on-site medical attention and social workers, limited and unfair legal representation. They also are subjected to torture and sometimes expected to give birth under adverse conditions.

A recent case of a female Palestinian prisoner, Hana al-Shalabi went on hunger strike on February 16th to protest Israel detaining her without charge or trial. She has previously spent more than two years in detention without charge or trial — a practice known as "administrative detention" which is an outright breach of International Human Rights. Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) says that no person should be "subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention". Today, Hana still continues her hunger strike to highlight the plight of Palestinian prisoners thus demanding justice and freedom. Let us disclose that the 8th of March is a day of solidarity with the Palestinian prisoners, and to unite support for the women's movement behind this cause. Let us dare to speak out against the injustices the women of Palestine are facing and the burden of the occupation in their everyday lives — through their courage, honour and determination they symbolise our inspiration. Let us commend the work of the NGOs' and human rights movements that uphold the rights of women for justice and respect and empower them to break free from the chains of slavery and occupation. On this particular day, we send our greetings and tributes to every woman who remains resilient despite all challenges and the difficulties encountered daily. -Palestinian Mission UK, palestinianmissionuk.com

In Memory of Mr. William Brandon Lacy Campos, RIP

Greetings Readers of Black & Pink!

My name is Ms. Gabrielle, and I am a proud bi-sexual woman. I have been getting the Black & Pink Newsletter for about a year now. Sadly, yesterday I received my November issue and read the article concerning our beloved friend, William Brandon Lacy Campos. I was shaken deeply, as well as heartbroken, down to my core. The article mentioned, "We do not yet understand how to save these complicated lives" and "We must start to have a different conversation." I completely agree! I am a prime example of someone having not been able to handle the oppression.

I am currently incarcerated in a woman's California prison. I was given a sentence of manslaughter. Instead of allowing someone to take my life, either directly or not, I did something that I never did in my life, and that was standing up for myself for the very first time. Unfortunately, a life was lost, and my bully didn't make it out of the fight. Now I sit in prison, with a whole different fight! All because society wouldn't help me when I begged them to and decided to ignore me being bullied at my school. Therefore, I did the only thing I thought I could do, in that moment and time. Nothing justifies taking a life! But nothing can justify bullying another human being! For those of you who doesn't know how it feels to be bullied...I thank the universe that you have never gone through this pain that millions of us suffer through, and lost their lives behind. However, if you can relate, you are not alone! Trust and believe that many others, including myself, understand your battle.

Bullying any other human being, for any reason, is wrong. Unjust! Inconsiderate! And unfair! People shouldn't have to be killed, commit suicide, or get beat up on a daily basis because of their sexuality, race, or even how a person looks. Not one person has the right to make another person feel less than or weird because of who they are!

And for those people that continue to prey on the weak, and are the cause of many deaths, either suicide or murder...you should be ashamed of yourself! The next time you cruel people decide to attack, understand that the victim could be your own mother, father, sister, or brother. You wouldn't want it done to you, so grow up and stop the bondage of hatred!

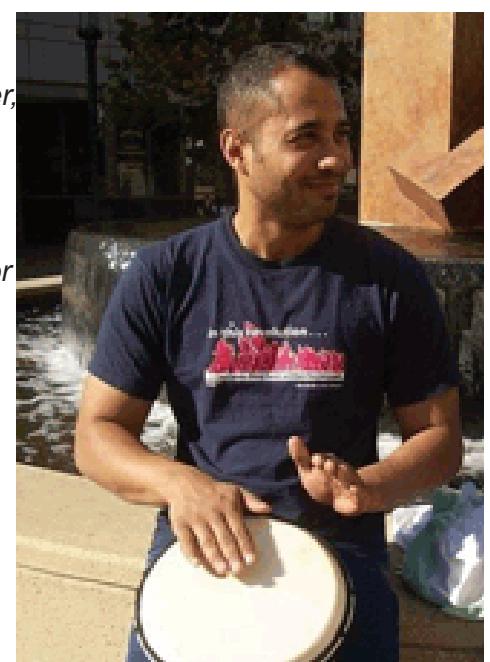
We do need to start having a "different conversation." A conversation for every Brandon, every Gabrielle, and a conversation for Everyone who suffers for being Human! A conversation for everyone who has lost in one way or another. **You are not alone! United, we can do anything!!** Respectfully, Gabrielle, California

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"He was truly a unique man. He has been described rightly as a warrior, an author, an advocate and a blogger, and most importantly he has been described as a good friend to all. He battled drug abuse and homophobia and wrote candidly about his HIV-positive status. As a gay man of color living with HIV, he literally bared his soul for all to see, and in that nakedness he exposed the many injustices that the disenfranchised have to endure...Brandon described himself as "a poet, playwright, journalist, amateur chef and life commentator doing his bit to put his foot in the asses of the regressive masses, while putting filling and nutritious food on plates of folks that ain't got much and deserve better."



-From Aundaray Guess on HuffPost

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A Message from Jason

Dear friends,

I hope that you all are enjoying the transition to the newspaper as much as we are. This change and growth feels really exciting for us as a family. I am hopeful that the newspaper format will provide more opportunities to explore different types of story-telling; including even monthly columnists from some of you all that reflect on ongoing campaigns or that share advice, maybe even a little gossip at times. We will also, per request of a number of prisoners, include some more explicitly political analysis. Black and Pink is an abolitionist effort that is organizing towards the end of all aspects of the prison industrial complex, from cops to judges, from prisons to immigration detention centers, from metal detectors in schools to cameras in housing projects, and so much more. We will continue sharing analysis to build our collective political knowledge. We have much wisdom to take in from the 1970s anti-prison movements and having a strong understanding of the system we are fighting is key to the success of our struggle. We look forward to printing your knowledge, wisdom, and reflections on what we build together.

One of the things that makes Black and Pink a really different and important organization is that we work with all people locked behind bars who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, two spirit, same-gender loving, homosexual, and any other marginalized sexual and/or gender identity. This means we are an open family that includes people who are doing time for drug possession, bank expropriation (bank robbery), assault, murder, rape, check forgery, fraud, child abuse, manslaughter, and so on. We are an open family of people who have been victimized and people who have caused harm upon others. We are people who are locked up for things we have done and things we are innocent of. We are the people you want to be friends with inside and the people you generally care nothing about. We are made of many races, genders, ages, nationalities, religions, sentence lengths, and so forth. Our responsibility as a collective is to take account of our differences and honor them while following the leadership of those most targeted by the system we are fighting. We share the responsibility to build a shared understanding of how we stand with one another. We would do well to heed the call of the International Workers of the World, "An Injury to One is an Injury to All!"

While recognizing our strength in community there is also a need for those within the Black and Pink family who have caused harm to others to consider what accountability and responsibility looks like. As abolitionists we know that prison does not bring about authentic justice, but those who have sexually assaulted someone, killed someone, abused someone, or inflicted some kind of suffering on another need to take part in a kind of transformative process that includes healing, change of behavior, and accountability for their actions. The organization Generation 5 has come up with some principles and goals of Transformative Justice to help shape what the work could/should look like:

- Safety, healing, and agency for survivors
- Accountability and transformation for people who harm
- Community action, healing, and accountability
- Transformation of the social conditions that perpetuate violence - systems of oppression and exploitation, domination, and state violence

The principles of a Transformative Justice approach to addressing all forms of violence include:

- Liberation
- Shifting power
- Accountability
- Safety
- Collective Action
- Sustainability



I would suggest that everyone in our Black and Pink family has things to be held accountable for and also has things to hold other people accountable for. Our fight against the prison industrial complex does not need to keep us from doing our own internal work. This month, let's all think about how we can be engaging in these types of processes. If you are someone who has caused others harm, write a submission about how this process could interact in your life. If you are someone who has been victimized by others, consider writing a reflection on how you would want to see a process like this work for you. Can any of us imagine healing? Can we imagine a different world? Can we imagine transformation? Let us do this work together knowing that once there were no prisons, that day will come again.

In loving struggle,
Jason

26 Concrete Things To Do To Abolish Prisons in Illinois

Black & Pink "free world" leadership is inspired by this ambitious, strategic, amazing list adapted from Project NIA, niastories.wordpress.com. We weren't sure if we should include it, because many things involve being in the "free world", but we hope that this sort of effort gives you hope!

1. Fight against the proposed Chicago Public School closures
2. Learn about and advocate for restorative and transformative justice.
3. Join the Mental Health Movement which is fighting to save our existing mental health clinics from closure in Chicago.
4. Interrupt the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Support the Yes to Counselors, No to More Cops in Schools Campaign
5. Interrupt the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Teach youth how to catalogue police harassment and overdiscipline at school.
6. Support the young people from Fearless Leading by the Youth (FLY) as they organize to bring a needed trauma center to the Southside that will serve EVERYONE.
7. Tell your legislators: "Close Dwight Prison Now"
8. Learn about the history of policing, violence, and resistance.
9. Support efforts to close the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and re-direct the funds to community-based alternatives to detention and to programming that will support youth.
10. Support youth-led efforts like the Street Youth Rise Up Campaign which are documenting and organizing against institutional violence.
11. Join the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign.
12. Invite youth members of the Know Your Rights Project to speak with their peers and adults about their rights in the criminal legal system
13. Join parents across Chicago who are organizing for quality education and against the school-to-prison pipeline
14. Get educated about the Prison Industrial Complex
15. Host your own teach-in about the prison industrial complex
16. Support organizations that are fighting against immigrant detention and deportations.
17. Support and join the campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage in Illinois.
18. Become an advocate with Illinois Action For Children.
19. Join the Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce to create and disseminate RELEVANT curricula for young people.
20. Reach out to those currently locked up behind bars.
21. Stop relying on and calling the police to solve any and all community problems.
22. Join the Illinois Campaign to End the New Jim Crow as they organize against police violence.
23. Start a Creative Resistance Project like the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials
24. Refuse to serve on juries for drug cases or consider nullification if you do serve on drug cases as a juror.
25. Open your wallets and contribute needed funds to local organizations
26. Pay attention to the laws that are being proposed. Ask yourself if the proposed law is going to "extend or curtail the reach of the PIC." If the answer is extend it, then mobilize to oppose these laws.

Letters to our Family

Dear Black & Pink Family,

Greetings! It's Deon in Cali once more giving my love, hugs and kisses to all who listen. I love you all !! :)

I read my Sept 2012 issue of the Newsletter, and was thrown to the floor by the mention of the struggles we as a people share. More often than I would like to admit, I've had to sit a younger version of myself down to explain what a self-destructive lifestyle of self hate will bring if we don't seek strength, empowerment, and love. I talk to the new girls and ask that we become friends before all hell breaks loose due to bad relationships, officer abuse, and whatever else can happen. **I'm too upbeat to fail and too strong to break.** I pray love shows its light in all of us so that we are beacons to the lost youth still looking for a home and family to rely on.

I love ya'll out there, so pick up a pen and use your words to touch those who are in need of your courage.

Peace, Love, and Kisses,
Deon, California

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Dear Black & Pink,

Greetings, my fellow Sisters and Brothers. I hope this letter finds all doing well and enjoying the days, as best as you can in a prison setting. My name is Jay and I am 47 years old. I am Gay and half way through my 6th year of a 16-37 year sentence.

I am so glad to receive the Black & Pink Newsletter. It helps me feel stronger and better for being gay. It helps wash away the shame I had for a long time. As I was growing up it took me a long while to embrace being gay. Mostly because of living in a homophobic area. Plus, I am a Christian and had to deal with believing that being Gay is against God and the Bible.

It took my getting arrested to come to terms with being gay, as it ended up being outed in the media to a point. So, my getting arrested not only opened my eyes to the silliness of being ashamed that I was gay, but helped to open my eyes to the silly trappings that religion places on people, because we are different and people have a hard time accepting what they perceive as not fitting into their views.

So, now I am proud to say I am Gay and my love goes out to all my LGBTQ Brothers & Sisters. To those at Black & Pink, keep up the good work. To my Brothers and Sisters who are struggling and fighting for us in ways that I at the moment can not, may the Deity you worship guide and protect you.

Love,
Jay in PA

Dearest Community,

I really would like to share something with all of you because to me it's the most amazing thing in the world that has happened to me, and I hope it may also bring light and hope to others. Recently I married the love of my life because she is the most amazing and beautiful woman I have ever been so blessed to get to know. I'm a man who fell in love with a transgender woman for exactly who she is. She stood by me when other people failed to, never judged me, and gave me love, hope, and friendship that was so desperately needed. I never judge her, and I never fail to give her the love, friendship, and happiness she needs as well. I am proud to stand beside her through any decisions she makes, hardships she may face, or obstacles she may need to cross. I'm more educated on what it is to be transgender now that I ever thought possible, and I'm much more aware of all possible life circumstances. We've had to face a lot over the past 3 years, but we did it and we accomplished our goal of becoming husband and wife.

For anyone who may at one point think that they will never find someone who will treat you right and love you for who you are...know that you can and one day will find someone. Try to avoid getting into positions where you are abused physically or mentally, and be true in every commitment you make. One day you'll find that someone that makes you happy and makes you feel like the man or woman you truly are. Don't limit yourself, and don't screw up a good thing when you do find it. Be honest in every encounter, and be loved for who you really are. I once would have ridiculed my wife for her being trans...now, I'm so happy and so proud to be her husband. I love my wife Yecaira more than anything!

John, New York

Lynne Stewart's Message for International Women's Day

lynnestewart.org

This is a cry from deep in my soul on behalf of my sisters--abused, forgotten, made marginal. We are always aware of our place on the rungs of the ladder of oppression based on race and class and sex.

Since this needs be brief I want to first talk about sisters Indian--Asian and Native American. It is the most difficult concept to conceive of the evil predatory communities these women on different sides of the world live in. **Rape is VIOLENCE not sex.** It has been routine for men to absolutely do as they will without any fear of retribution legally. There have been no courts to Prosecute, to PUNISH. My first rejoinder is always to urge self-defense--that will always get a woman to Court. But she may be the victim again. Right now, the Congress has passed a "law" that we hope will protect Native Indian women here. But there have been many "Laws". There is greater hope in India where there has been a righteous female uprising that cannot, will not be ignored.

Briefly I just want to mention --women who are not in the cruel world but suffer behind bars --cages, if you will. Some of us are political --here because the Government has criminalized our actions or framed us --I call out to you to Remember and Cherish Marie Mason, a "green warrior", Afia Siddique "a heroine in her own Pakistan for her brave resistance", and also Me--Still fighting, Still Struggling. Still loving you all.

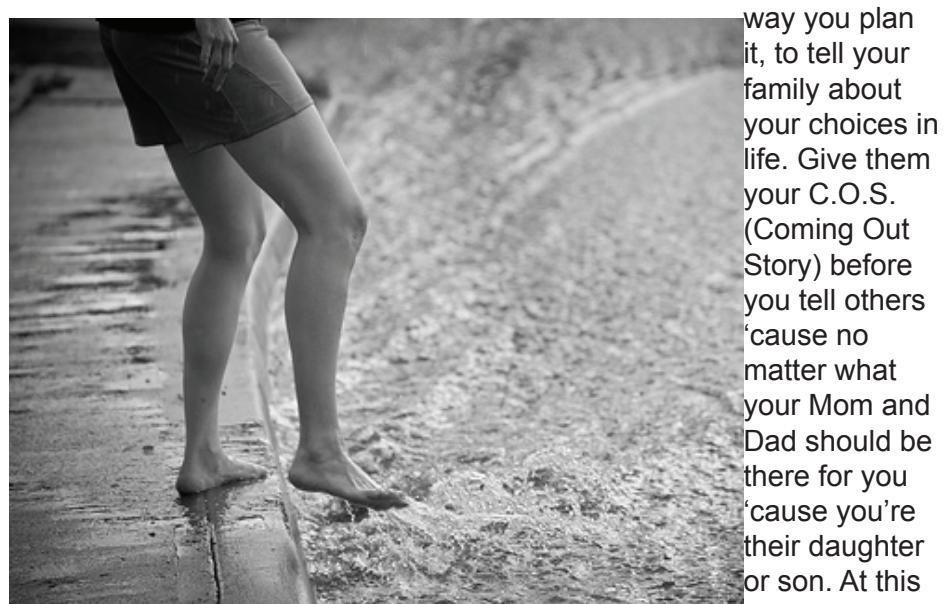
Love Struggle,
Lynne, TX

"Radical human rights attorney Lynne Stewart has been falsely accused of helping terrorists. On Tuesday, April 9, 2002, she was arrested and agents searched her Manhattan office for documents. She was arraigned before Manhattan federal Judge John Koeltl. This is an obvious attempt by the U.S. government to silence dissent, curtail vigorous defense lawyers, and install fear in those who would fight against the U.S. government's racism, seek to help Arabs and Muslims being prosecuted for free speech and defend the rights of all oppressed people."

Lynne Stewart received a 28-month sentence in October 2006. The government appealed the sentence, and in 2009 Lynne was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison. She is now in a federal medical facility for women in Texas, thousands of miles away from her home, family and community."

Dear Black & Pink,

My name is Joe, I'm from Texas. I'm 27 years old and am doing 30 years in prison for stupid stuff. I'm writing this 'cause of many reasons, the most important one is to reach out to all of the family out there that I know we have as an LGBTQ Nation. I want to let them know that you aren't alone, you have people, you just have to know how to reach out and ask them for what you're needing. I just learned that myself, so believe me it's not hard. Really all you have to do is be yourself and talk to people or write to people. I'm 27 like I said and I've just now really told my family that I like both worlds, I'm a bi male. I really wasn't open about it until I met some people that are locked up with me and being around them has really opened up my view of life as a bi-sexual. I'm not going to use real names but two people that really showed me were Ghost and Casper, they know who I'm talking about- It's me B.B., Hay!! So take it from me, all you have to do is be one with yourself, don't be afraid to come out to the people around you that you know are the same as you. Yeah, it's going to be hard at first but after that first step it's all been gravy for me after. **You got to get your feet wet first to get into the pool of freedom.** Also it might not turn out the



way you plan it, to tell your family about your choices in life. Give them your C.O.S. (Coming Out Story) before you tell others 'cause no matter what your Mom and Dad should be there for you 'cause you're their daughter or son. At this time, I'm still

waiting on a letter back from my Mom to see what she has to say about my life choice. Till next time, this is Joe from Texas and I'm sending love out to all my family and the LGBTQ Nation and saying, make that first step today, you will feel better.

-Joe, Texas

Photo: flickr.com/photos/xysmas/

Trans Folks Down for the Fight

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Dear Black & Pink,

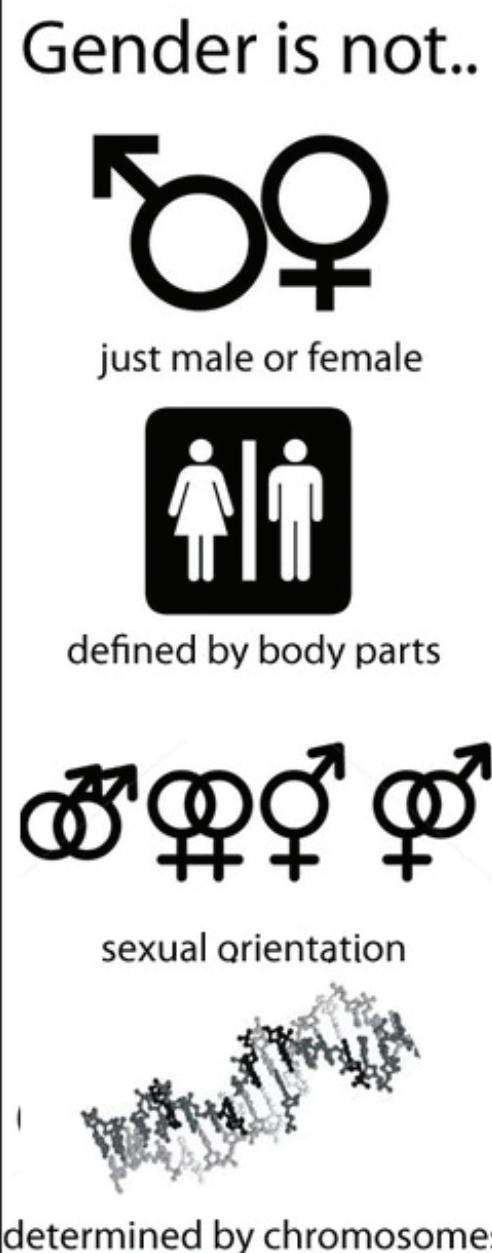
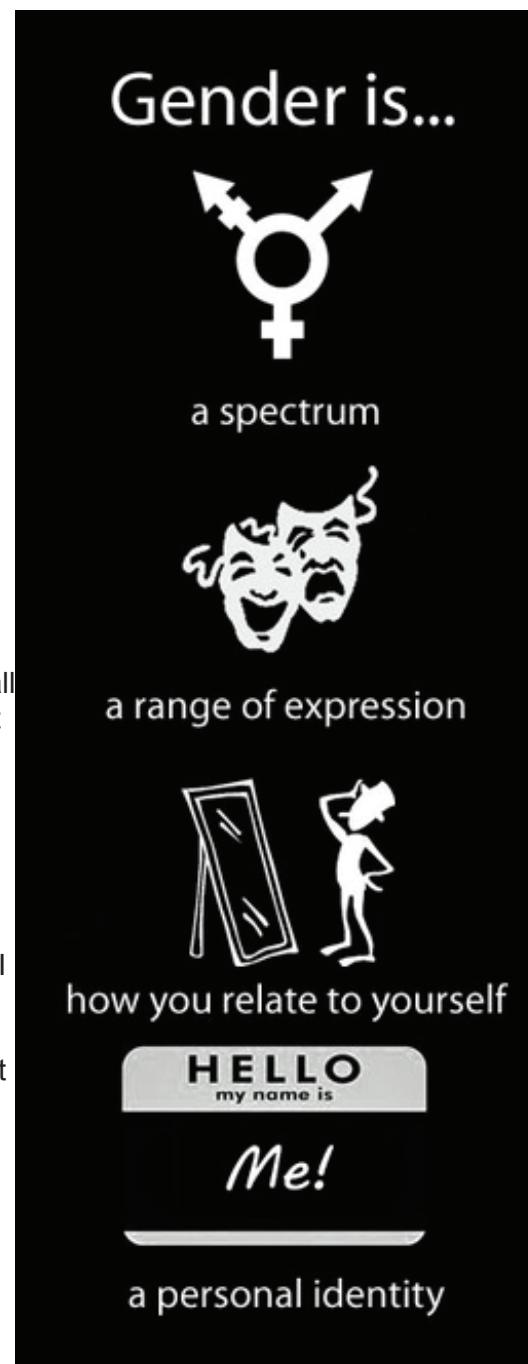
My name is Charles and I love reading the monthly Newsletter. I am glad I found your address and wrote you. From dealing with my problems and reading the Newsletter, I know if you do not get the paperwork and research started, you won't get nothing done in prison.

In the Arkansas Prison Law Library they have an Administrative Directive (A.D.) called Gender Identity Disorder and that has helped to keep my hormones going. They stopped them for a while but I did research in the Law Library as much as I could and got my hormones back and the male hormone blocker. I am still doing paperwork to get the electrolasis done. Right now the prison I'm at is saying is is not a medical need so I said I am going to keep researching and I will get it done. I am not the type of person to just sit there. Your newsletter gives me ideas sometimes on things I am working on, please keep the Newsletters coming.

I was supposed to be out in June, but because of some inmates lies, I got more months to do now. The Deputy Warden said I will be transferred. By the end of the month, I will be somewhere else and another Warden said I would be in a one person cell locked down and my visit be will "no contact." I do not like that, I am going to do all the paperwork I can to be off of that, if I have to take the person that runs the prison to court to get this done. I am going to show them they can not treat us like this, I will not sit still and let them do this to me. They are already playing with my tray's. Being locked in a cell you have no choice but to eat what they bring you, which is a diet tray. The infirmary and the officers say I need to lose weight I said no to them. I have sat there at the door not touching the diet tray and screamed. They came to me and said, it is a regular tray, Then I said "OK" then when they came to get trays they said "I see you ate the diet tray." They lie to me to force me to eat and I have wrote I do not know many grievances, and they say it is for my own good. I just hope that when I am off this restriction another 30-something days that they do not keep me from buying that I want on commissary. I said the prison does not run me, I run myself.

Sincerely,
Charles, Arkansas

P.S. After all the paperwork I had to do I finally got an appointment with the doctor and last night the doctor took me off the diet trays. Boy, was I happy. I can eat my regular food now. :)



Dear Black & Pink,

Hello my brothers and Sisters! I just received my first Newsletter. Here is my story. My legal name is Ronny, but I'm a (MTF) pre-op Transgender Woman with Gender Identity Disorder (GID), but like Lady Gaga said, "I was born this way," so don't be a drag, just be a Queen. From the day I was born my parents raised me as a beautiful little girl, and they named me Heather, so I went through my life knowing I was a girl born with a deformity, and knowing that one day I would have the deformity removed. I started receiving hormones at the age of 2. I love being a girl more than anything. I had people trying to tell me all my life that, that was a penis between my legs, but I keep trying to tell them, no it's not, it's a deformity, that I'm a Girl not a Boy. I guess that they hate us Transgenders so much that they framed me for a crime that I'm not capable of committing. I'm a fun loving 44 year old trans-woman, who wants nothing more than to love everyone, I'm not capable of hurting anyone. And right now I've been locked up since 1-13-2005, for 7½ years on a non-violent 50 year time piece. But with good time and if I don't make Parole then I'll discharge in 2024, but I'm hoping to find a Parole Plan to Parole to either in San Francisco, California, or in New York City, but I really need some help with that.

When I got locked up in Jan. 2005, they took me off my hormone treatments and without my testosterone blocking agents, the testosterone came flooding back into my body, and ruined all of the progress that I had made toward becoming a woman. I went through so much withdrawal from not getting my hormones. And now I'm filing a 42 U.S.C. 1983 Lawsuit against the D.O.C. Medical, because they are refusing me any kind of medical treatment at all for GID.

I would really like to hear from others about these issues, because all of my family are now passed on, and I am truly alone now, and I could use a friend or two, or even a Sister who knows what I'm going through. I feel connected to all Transgender Women, I guess that's why I became the Queen Bee here in prison in Oklahoma, that way I can fight for the LGBTQ rights of all of my Brothers and Sisters who come through the front gate.

Well, I should close for now, but not forever. Well Bye! Bye!
Love Always, From you Sister 4-life,
Heather, Oklahoma

Dear Black & Pink,

Hello to everyone in my LGBTQI Family. I would like to share my story with y'all. I'm a pre-op Transgender woman incarcerated in prison in Oklahoma. My legal name is Ronny D., and my Girl name is Phoebe H. Before coming to prison I never knew how much our rights were being violated. I'm no locked up on a non-violent 50 years for a crime I did not commit, and my rights in here are being violated everyday. Now, I'm the only Transgender on this yard, but the other gays are afraid to fight for their rights, so I fight for the rights of those who can't fight for themselves. I don't get any respect from any of them, I usually just get criticized for standing toe to toe with the guards. So for the last 8 years I have become a Transgender activist fighting for the rights of all LGBTQI people in our community, and I love doing it. And when I get out I will continue this fight for all of those who can't fight for themselves.

Honee Bea talked about letting our voices be heard, so I would like mine to be heard as well. So if at all possible, I would like to be a part of this Trans Youth Support Network mentioned in the Newsletter, but I would not stop with the Youth, but for all Trans community, and the reason why is because when I first got locked up and tried to reach out for support, all of the places I wrote were only for Trans-youth under the age of 24, and I'm 44, so my question is what about older Trans women and men. So I would want to help all Transgenders.

Right now I'm fighting in court in the 10th Circuit to get Transgender Health Care for anyone who needs it. At first they would not even talk to me about being a Transgender, they even told me that Gender Identity Disorder (GID) was not a mental health issue. I know, crazy right? The other day a Captain told me to take my hair out of pigtails, and I told him No, and I asked him "Why do you keep f-ing with me about my hair?"

And he said, "Why do you keep dressing like a Girl?" I replied, "Because that's who I am, and if you don't like it, ship me somewhere else." And I told him this is a fight that you're not going to win. And I guess I'm starting to make progress, because the Warden who is one of the Defendants told the Captain to leave me alone about my hair, she said we are in enough trouble over this lawsuit.

As a closing note, for the Trans Day of Remembrance, I will promise to keep all 265 Transgender people who were murdered since last November (2011) in my prayer and rituals, and Blessed Be to all Transgenders.

With all my love,
Phoebe H., Oklahoma, XOXOXOX

Struggling for Rights!

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Merry Meet My New Extended Brothers & Sisters! I've only received the Newsletter for a few months but I wanted to let ya'll know that I read every story/poem and get strength & hope from each one. Many of you show courage and I'm proud of this.

I encourage everyone to keep fighting for our rights, as I am doing. I also have many grievances (58 to date for 2012 alone) for many staff or policy violations. Amongst them are: religion, medical treatment, reviewing files, discrimination, and so on. As usual, they were denied or rejected for this reason or that. But I have found two fellow inmates who know the policies and laws and are helping me file a civil suit. Not many inmates in here like me because I'm openly feminine gay. These two individuals respect that. They are of the Muslim faith; I am of the Wiccan faith. I know their faith has some strict codes but these two are helping me out of kindness.

Recently, PA law changed in a particular area and it affects me as they are now retro-ing it. These two individuals have also agreed now to appeal my conviction. It shows me that there are people in prison that consider us all equal and a family in this society. I encourage those harmed by staff, policies, laws, fellow inmates, etc, to not give up or give in. Keep fighting for our rights for "one voice can make a difference."

I write this in December, so upon closing this letter, I ask for a gift we all can give to each other. We all say to pray for one another, which is commendable, but please, also pray for those who are now affected by the recent tragedies in this country. Let's pray for all the victims, their family, friends, loved ones, classmates, and all who have been affected by the violence.

Blessed Be!
Piper, Pennsylvania



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

How's it going with ya'll? Someone had written in about his cell condition, the cold and size. I understand about small cells, since I share a cell with a large male in a 5'2" X 8' cell built in 1943. Yes, it gets cold, but not where our toilets freeze. However, here in South TX, in summer it's often 105 degrees. And it gets up to 117 degrees on the wings, that's with fans and windows open. But since they supply ice, and water, it's humane. Bullcrap!

Anyway, enough of my crying. If what my brother said was true about the cold and no blankets, I might be able to help. I went to the Law Library to look up cases for him to file under. My brother has a right to file under "conditions of confinement as a cruel and unusual punishment." The Eighth Amendment forbids it. However, to win an Eighth Amendment case, you must prove both an "objective" component- the seriousness of the challenged conditions, and a "subjective" component- the state of mind of the officials who are responsible for those conditions. The first is easy, but most cases get dismissed because they fail to prove the officials meant to harm you and knew what they were doing.

From what I read, my Brother was put into these cold cells because of disciplinary reasons. If that's the case, he has a valid grievance. The Supreme Court has listed as basic human needs "food, clothing, shelter, medical care and reasonable safety," as well as warmth and exercise.

To violate the Eighth Amendment, deprivations of basic needs must be serious enough to amount to the wanton and unnecessary infliction of pain. However, they need not inflict physical injury or cause lasting or permanent harm. Rather, conditions must have a "mutually enforcing effect" that produces the deprivation of a single, identifiable human need. In order to become unconstitutional, examples of this "mutually enforcing effect" include, "A low cell temperature at night with failure to issue blankets." These are the courts words, not mine. Check this out: "Often, the length of time prisoners are subjected to an unpleasant condition plays a part in determining whether it is cruel and unusual. But especially degrading or abusive conditions are unconstitutional even if imposed for short periods of time." [emphasis added by author]

See Gordon v. Faber 973 F. 2nd 686, 687-88 8th cir 1992, where less than two hours of freezing temps was enough, and 940 F. 2nd 1055 7th Cir 1991, where damages were awarded for just four days of subfreezing temps. Also see Wilson v. Seiter III S. Ct. at 2327.

We as prisoners can't just complain all the time, we have to put paper in these people's lives. It does work, but it will take time. We have a support system in place, including Black & Pink. We need to reach out for advice, share our experiences and our knowledge of how to fight back and change this system. Right now all the prison systems are stretched beyond belief, they can't afford the courts in their business right now. So that's what we have to make sure we do. Put the courts in their business. Look, one thing before I close. We can end the prison complex monster in this country, but we have to do it right, not with frivolous complaints. Look, this is prison, and it's not a cake walk, but at the very least the system has to treat us with the care that's been required by the courts. So let's bring down their system by using their system against them.

I love each and every one of my Brothers and Sisters. And if you ever need advice or help, let's use what our loving family at Black & Pink has given us. A way to Stand Together.

Pride, Peace, & Unity
In the struggle,
Billy, Texas

Revolutionary Greetings!

Self-Determination is about power and manifesting it for your purpose- Our purpose. And what is that, you may ask? The fair and equal treatment of all people no matter what their race, creed, gender, or sexual orientation. The abolishment of modern day slavery and mass incarceration, and the destruction of the prison-industrial complex! Have you even been demonstrated or discriminated against?" "I Have!" I didn't say it, Marshal Mathers aka Eminem said it. A poor white dude from Detroit broke into the Rap Game. He tore down barriers and destroyed stereotypes. So in essence, he went against the grain. Nevertheless, he excelled. Think it was easy?

Black & Pink as well as The New Afrikan Black Panther Party have The Right Stuff, like The New Kids on the Block. We are going to tear down boundaries and build strong alliances and solidarity with all oppressed humyn beings! Our time is now and we need you! Lupe Fiasco says "In order to be a Factor, you have to be an Actor!" That means if you see an injustice, speak out against it! If you see a hungry homeless persyn- feed them! If you see an elderly persyn getting abused or mistreated- Act up, God damnit! Yes, Black & Pink as well as NABPP are about love, honor, and respect, but do you think we are going to sit back like passive robots while one of our family members gets handled? Better not! So I'm saying all this to say Join Us!

It is time for us to start a grassroots movement to organize a nationwide campaign to address Mass Incarceration in Amerikkka. The only way the White House is going to pay attention is if we gather millions to march on Washington DC. There is a disproportionate amount of Black and Brown men and womyn behind bars and concrete walls in Amerikkka. Get at Black & Pink! And get at me Comrade Malik, The New Afrikan Black Panther Party has room for all: Black Panthers, Brown Panthers, White Panthers, Arab, Asian and guess what? Pink Panthers!! LGBTQ Power- that's Right. We are shutting all this bullcrap down! In today's society, talk is cheap. People want to see Action. With that being said, I encourage you to share this article with family, friends, significant others, and lovers! We welcome your ideas but most of all, we need your support. Let's make this the biggest Flash Mob in history! Stay tuned, keep your ear to the ground and your eyes glued to cyberspace- This Revolution won't be Televised! Here come the drums! Dare to struggle, Dare to win. All power to the people!

In Struggle,
Comrade Malik,
New Afrikan Black Panther Party (NABPP, PC),
Black Riders Liberation Army,
Black & Pink Family Member for LIFE, TX



Copyright by Signe Wilkinson

Art from the Heart

Only You

Things locked inside my head
Remembering all the things that you have said
Every time I think of you, I catch my breath
I hope you know that I love you to death
This feeling so deep inside of me such a tender fantasy
One day I reached for you and there you stood
I never imagined something could feel so good
Your sweet smell around me
The way that you surround me
Sometimes when I'm alone all I do is think
The sweet memory of you becomes my only link
You have given me the best of you
And now all I want is the rest of you
When these dark rain clouds finally disappear
Let me feel your warm breath whisper in my ear
All the sweet things you know I love to hear
The softness of your touch
The one I love so much

Speedy, Florida

Come from the Closet

Oh how sweet
my reluctance to be discreet speaks

"Whom shall disdain such an heir
that reigns alone as king and queen?
I gait contrary to the timid and modest
in no mythology one is god and goddess!"

Like the brilliance of the sun's brightness
the tone gradually rises

"My defiance dances with the mind's eye
glances of admiration occupy the faces of those who wouldn't dare try
Of course, in the minds of those who despise, envy abides
but what kind of man is mankind if the woman hides?"

It has spoken to the soul, so listen with the heart
come from the closet and alight what is dark.

-Ms. Tyra, Florida

True Love

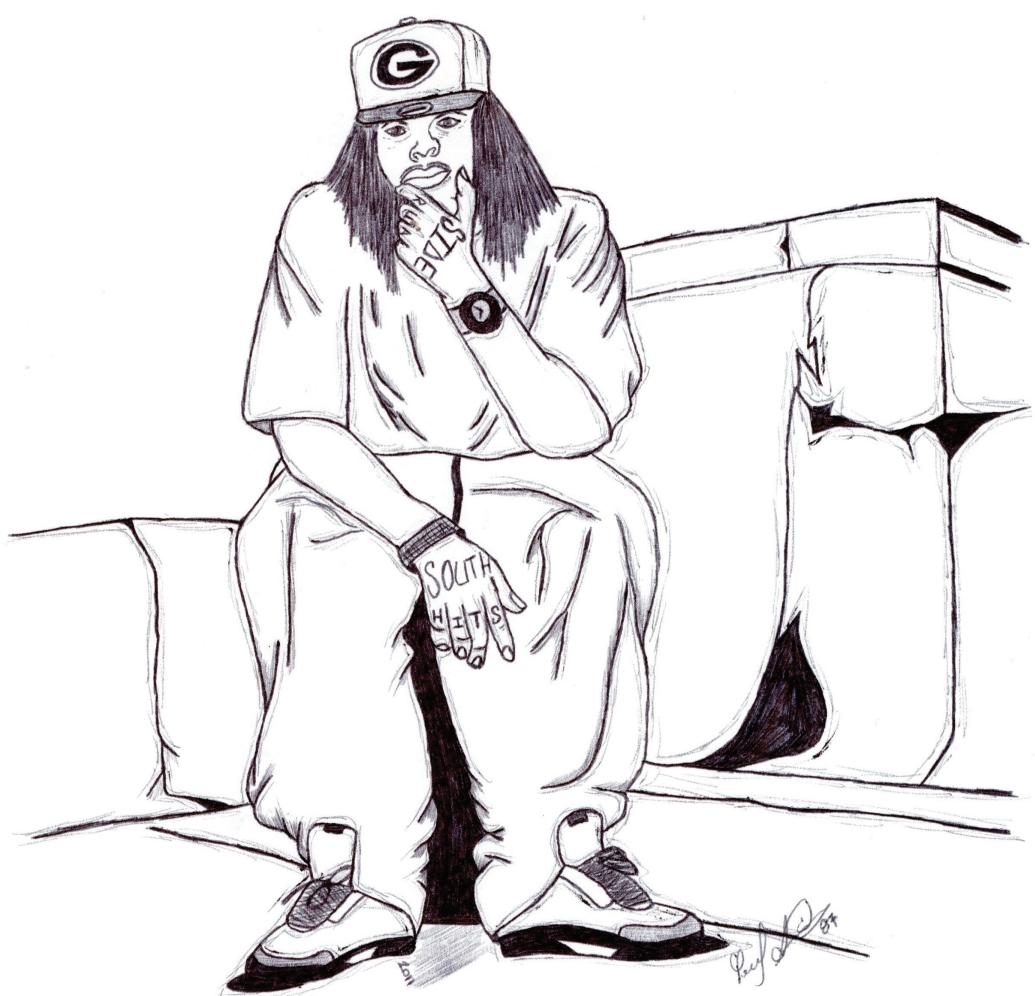
True love is to see,
To see things not just for what they are but to also
See them for what they could be.
Not to look at people for who you think they are,
But to see them for who they truly are.
True love is to have nothing but be willing to give,
To give your life for someone who is getting ready
to die but who want to live.
To do for others what you would want other to do for you,
And to do for others because your love is truly true.

Love, Your Friend and Family,
True Love, Pennsylvania

What Happened?

What happens when a person forgets themselves. What happens when they are no longer the 'divine' creation, the universal essence they originally were. What happens when they become everyone else's ideals. When they are hijacked by others' psyche. Others' doctrine of right and wrong. Others' character precept. The philosophy of broken people striving to be whole. What happens to them when the "truth" no longer exists and is only a mere expression of "opinion." Imprisoned watching reality veiled by ignorance seeing only the reflections on the wall. What happens to "Him"? What happened to "Her"? How did we get here?

Jon "Ms. Gabriel," Texas



Black and Pink "free world" leadership would like to extend a special thanks to incarcerated leadership circle member Shaylanna for her help in recruiting more free-world pen-pals through the Unitarian Universalist "Standing on the Side of Love" campaign in February, and to Standing on the Side of Love! Shaylanna wrote about why having a pen-pal was important to her, and her artwork was featured as well. As a result, 58 people committed to being pen-pals with our incarcerated family! Congratulations!

Artwork

Left: Jasmine J, CA
Right: Shaylanna, NY



Stories of Harm and Survival

Prison Rape Elimination Act v. The Dept. of Corrections

By: FREE BORN

The Place: A State prison unit

The Subject: A deaf and otherwise disabled/Safekeep prisoner.

Note: The Subject wears diapers for bowel and bladder incontinence, a fact the entire unit is aware of because: 1.) He is forced to shower with other prisoners in spite of sanitary and safety issues; 2.) The officers make a practice of "strip-harass-humiliate" those deemed as weak or easy prey.

Safekeep: Prisoners identified as "At high risk" and/or Passive

Safekeep Propaganda: Reference (by officers) to Safekeep as "the gay wing," and to the Safekeep prisoners in a derogatory or even sexual manner, which serves only to make the risk that much higher.

The Set-Up: In late May of 2012, The Subject along with about 30 other Safekeep prisoners went to the chowhall for the evening meal. The Hall Officer, who is in charge of running chow, placed a number of General Population (GP) wings into the chowhall right behind Safekeep. The maximum capacity of chowhall is 234, so after 40 minutes all the tables were full, and both serving lines were backed up with GP prisoners waiting to be fed. About 125 prisoners, including Safekeep, were staged in a small area waiting to exit the chowhall once the doors were unlocked (Note: Barriers Act).

The Incident: Two GP prisoners worked their way through the crowd and up behind The Subject. They pulled his pants down and tore off his diaper, then proceeded to physically and sexually assault The Subject, 1.) Pushing their fingers into his rectum; 2.) Trying to kiss and masturbate him; 3.) Slapping his testicles; 4.) Pulling on his penis and scrotum. This went on for about 20 minutes before the doors were opened and prisoners rushed to get out of the chowhall. The Subject with his pants still around his ankles was knocked to the floor and trampled.

Accomplices: Under the laws of today, TDCJ (et al) has a legal responsibility to protect all prisoners, with special regards to those they identify as High Risk. They had an obligation to keep The Subject and all Safekeep from this situation in the first place.

However, the officers on duty did not attempt to stop the assault, nor did they file the mandatory reports which would have identified the assailants and collected names of other possible witnesses. The Captain, at the central desk, then further violated the PREA, and ADA, and other laws by refusing to communicate with a deaf prisoner (The Subject). He instead used a TDCJ standard threat in a direct order: "Go to your wing or go to Lock-up and get a disciplinary case!" This also eliminated the mandatory medical evaluation and documentation.

Furthermore, all correspondence (letters and I-60's to the Warden's office, the Major, the Building Captain, and the Unit Safe Prisons Coordinator) regarding the incident went without reply. A Step #1 Grievance, on the assault and non-compliance, has simply disappeared (as so many others do) and all attempts to locate the grievance has also gone unanswered. This prison Administration has successfully prevented The Subject's four month effort to report and document a physical and sexual assault. Meanwhile, The Subject has suffered, not only the assault, but harassment by prison staff, and must live with the fear of the next assault.

Conclusion: This is but one of the countless offenses that take place within the prison system, which by biased attitude and inaction, sanction such acts. They give lip service to the PREA, but they ultimately will not comply. They are partly responsible for collection of evidence, documentation, securing witness statements and apprehending the assailants. There are no witnesses to what they do or what they do not do behind prison walls. They can simply deny every word of this or any account. So the PREA or any law has no real power inside this or any prison unit.

Epilogue: The truth is, the Administration believes rape and sexual assault is just a part of prison. It is a type of punishment. Not to punish you for your crime, but for being different- for being Gay or Trans or Deaf or just for being passive. I guess in a way their denial and cover-up shows they do understand it is against the law, even if they do not see that it is wrong.

You will note the use of FREE BORN. Free Born is a growing number of Jailhouse Lawyers who are concerned with Civil Laws or any laws that govern Prison Administration and the treatment of prisoners. We seek to correct the system and stand up against wrongs within these cold prison walls.

Dear Community,

I am at a hard place in my life, asking myself, "Is this all karma?" You see, this season marks 2 years in a row that I've been locked in my cell (when not in the hospital) on Administrative Detention for my own protection.

In 2011, I was brutally assaulted in my jail cell and sustained some very painful and permanent injuries, like a compound fracture in my right leg that broke in about 45 different places creating more nerve damage than I anticipated. Sure, I have a limp, a huge deep purple area that displays deep scars from wearing a wound vac for months, long incisions everywhere from 3 surgeries, nerve damage that has given me hammer toes with hypersensitivity from ankle to my tow tips, but at last the reoccurring infections were treated with Vancomycin for 6 weeks at a time, gratefully leaving me with a leg. There was a long time where the question of keeping my leg was sort of keeping all the pain secondary to the risk. That was because for the first 5 months I wasn't given but a couple weeks of very small pain relievers (Ibuprofen). I was not treated as though I had a painful and growing problem, risking amputation. I spent Thanksgiving and Christmas in the hospital shackled to a bed with two armed marshals and wasn't allowed to contact any relatives or for them to even be told if I was OK. After 49 days in the hospital I was back in the SHU of the detention center with a growing and festering infection until I was sent to a Medical Center in NC. Over a year later I am still in the Medical Center and again I was assaulted. The protocol is of course to put me in AD again, living in my cell all alone. Again Thanksgiving this past year was spent in the hospital for my 3rd surgery, then Christmas and New Years in AD. This past time my assault was a sexual assault where luckily I wasn't beat up into a broken mess on the floor. Just 2 years into an 8+ year prison term, it's not going too well. Some guys here are calling me a "rat & snitch"... which just adds to the titles I've already been pegged with, "Fag and CHOMO." Like I was saying, my charge, possession of child pornography, might have earned me some bad karma.

You see, I'm a good person and the most caring, loving, sweet, and funny guy I know. I'd like to think I've done a lot of good in my life. I care about people. I never believed in karma; I'm wondering now.

-Ken, North Carolina

Dear Black & Pink,

I'm writing this letter with comments about a Sept 2012 Newsletter article. I understand exactly what Jesse wrote. I'm an inmate in a state prison in PA. I have inmates treating me the same way. All trying to be cool around their homies, but behind their backs they're all trying to get me to have sex with them. And yes, I've been in prison for a little over 4 years and been with the same man since entering prison. But even though people know, they still come at me. All these people (which is about 70% of the prison I'm in) are all worried about what their so-called homies will say to them. I mainly pay these people no mind and I don't show them it bothers me. And for the most part most of them stopped making "sly" remarks to me because they realize I'm not doing nothing with them. So that's my advice; if you don't want people to approach you, try and show them they don't bother you and they might start leaving you alone.

Love & Peace,
Emi, Pennsylvania

Black & Pink,

I was born in Jackson, TN, in 1962. My family moved to Erie, PA, 5 years later. I saw my birth certificate for the first time when I was 6 years old. I looked at it and where it stated Race the word 'Nigger' was typed in. My mother saw the look on my face and explained that there were some racist people in power in TN.

Many years later in 1975, I was 13 years old. Me and a few teenage friends were hanging out on a Friday around 10pm a few blocks from my house. There was this bar on the corner that was surrounded by 6 or 7 police cars, a paddy-wagon, and 15 police, and three officers with K9's. They were raiding the place. I asked a man walking down the street, "What's going on?"

He told me, "There are putting the faggots in jail." "Why?" I asked. He said, "Cause they're homosexuals." "What did they do?" I asked. "Nothing," he said, "They do it every election year. They harass homos 'cause it looks good to voters. They charge them with lewd behavior."

I got scared and felt ill. I thought the cops were coming for me next. I look back on that memory at times in my life, and say to myself- There are bigots, racists, and bullies everywhere. Even though much has changed, things are still the same.

I read Black & Pink Newsletter and I smile to myself 'cause of all the gays, transpeople, people living with HIV, people of every race, dealing with issues and standing proud. I love to see and read about all your lives.

-Andre, Pennsylvania

The Summit

A gathering of formerly incarcerated, convicted, policed, and court-involved LGBTQ people in New England.

**Build Community
Challenge Stigma
Speak Your Truth**

Join the movement to abolish the prison industrial complex

Food will be provided.

When: Saturday April 27th 10:00am - 5pm
Where: UnionUnited Methodist Church
 485 Columbus Avenue
 Boston, MA 02118

Convened by
 Black and Pink
 &
 Hispanic Black Gay Coalition

For more information contact Jason Lydon
 Jason@blackandpink.org

Wiccan prisoners can sue for chaplain

Bob Egelko, S.F. Chronicle 2/19/13 ["inmate" changed to "prisoner"]

A state prisoner and former prisoner who practice the Wiccan religion can proceed with a lawsuit accusing California of discriminating by refusing to hire a Wiccan chaplain while paying for chaplains from more mainstream faiths, a federal appeals court ruled Tuesday. The women claim that Wicca, a goddess-worshiping form of witchcraft, has more adherents in the state women's prison at Chowchilla than Islam or Judaism, two of the five religions that have state-paid chaplains.

The appeals court told a federal judge in Fresno to determine whether the state prisons are unconstitutionally preferring majority religions over Wicca and other minority faiths without paid chaplains, such as Buddhism and Hinduism. The judge had dismissed the Chowchilla prisoners' lawsuit, a ruling the appeals court overturned Tuesday. Although the state is not required to "provide inmates with the chaplain of their choice," it must use neutral standards when deciding how to spend money on prisoners' religious needs, said the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

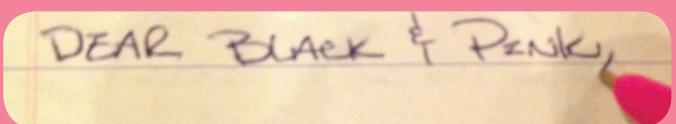
California prisons have long employed chaplains for Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Jews. After American Indian prisoners sued the state in 1985, the prison system began providing spiritual advisers for them. Wiccan prisoners have access to a volunteer chaplain. The two female prisoners who sued the prison system in 2007 - Shawna Hartmann, who has since been released, and Caren Hill - said the volunteer was able to meet with them only every two or three months, and that they and other Wiccans needed ordained clergy to perform "initiations, blessings and ceremonies" in a faith that relies on "an oral tradition of songs and stories."

U.S. District Judge Lawrence O'Neill dismissed the suit in 2011, finding no violations of the prisoners' rights. The appeals court agreed with much of his reasoning Tuesday, saying the prisons had not interfered with the women's right to practice their religion or intentionally discriminated against them by providing only a volunteer chaplain.

But the court said the women may be able to prove that the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is violating the constitutional ban on a governmental "establishment of religion," which prohibits a state from endorsing one faith over another. That ban requires the prisons to use "neutral criteria in evaluating whether a growing membership in minority religions warrants a reallocation of resources," the court said in a 3-0 ruling.

Addresses

If you would like to request:



Please use this topic tag, and we'll do our best:

Black & Pink - topic tag
 c/o Community Church of Boston
 565 Boylston St
 Boston, MA 02116

Newsletter Subscriptions (Start or Stop)	Newsletter Subscriptions
Newsletter Submissions (Poems, Art & Stories)	Newsletter Submissions
"Outside" Free Pen-Pal Request (Please note: Pen-Pal Request Form will be in this newsletter quarterly)	Pen-Pal
Address Change (Will take time to update; at this time, we are mostly unable to send back issues.)	Address Change
Black & Pink Organization Feedback	Developing Leadership
Request Erotica	Erotica
Religious Support	Religion
Volunteering (Send thank you cards to donors, etc.)	Volunteer
Advocacy Requests (include details about situation and thoughts about how calls or letters might help)	Black & Pink -Advocacy, c/o The City School, 614 Columbia Rd, Dorchester MA 02125 (Please note: Only advocacy letters to this address; others will not receive a response, please use above.)

Art: Reed apologizes that the art project is currently not accepting artwork for sales until we have a solid volunteer base. You can send in artwork for use in the newsletter! Use topic tag Newsletter Submissions. Feel free to include a description of your drawing!

LEGAL: Consider writing to Lambda Legal for support or referrals with legal issues that you are having. "Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work." Lambda Legal, National Office 120 Wall Street, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10005, 212-809-8585

New! Assistance with legal research and preparing for disciplinary and parole hearings. Hotline (9am-5pm EST): 617-495-3127, and by mail: Prison Legal Assistance Project, 6 Everett Street, Suite 5107, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA 02138

Another resource to turn to, if you can afford the subscription (\$24 yearly, payable with new stamps), is Prison Legal News. This resource was co-started by a former gay prisoner and Men Against Sexism organizer, Ed Mead, though now it is run by Paul Wright. You can reach them by writing to: Prison Legal News, P.O. Box 2420, West Brattleboro, VT 05303

SURVIVORS: Just Detention International provides support for prisoners who are survivors of sexual abuse. Write them at the legal address below for a packet. Each packet includes an introductory letter, a list of local resources, fact sheets, publications about recovery from sexual abuse, and a letter of hope from another survivor.

Ms. Chris Daley, Esq., 3325 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 340, Los Angeles, CA 90010